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15 April 1966

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

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*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EST)

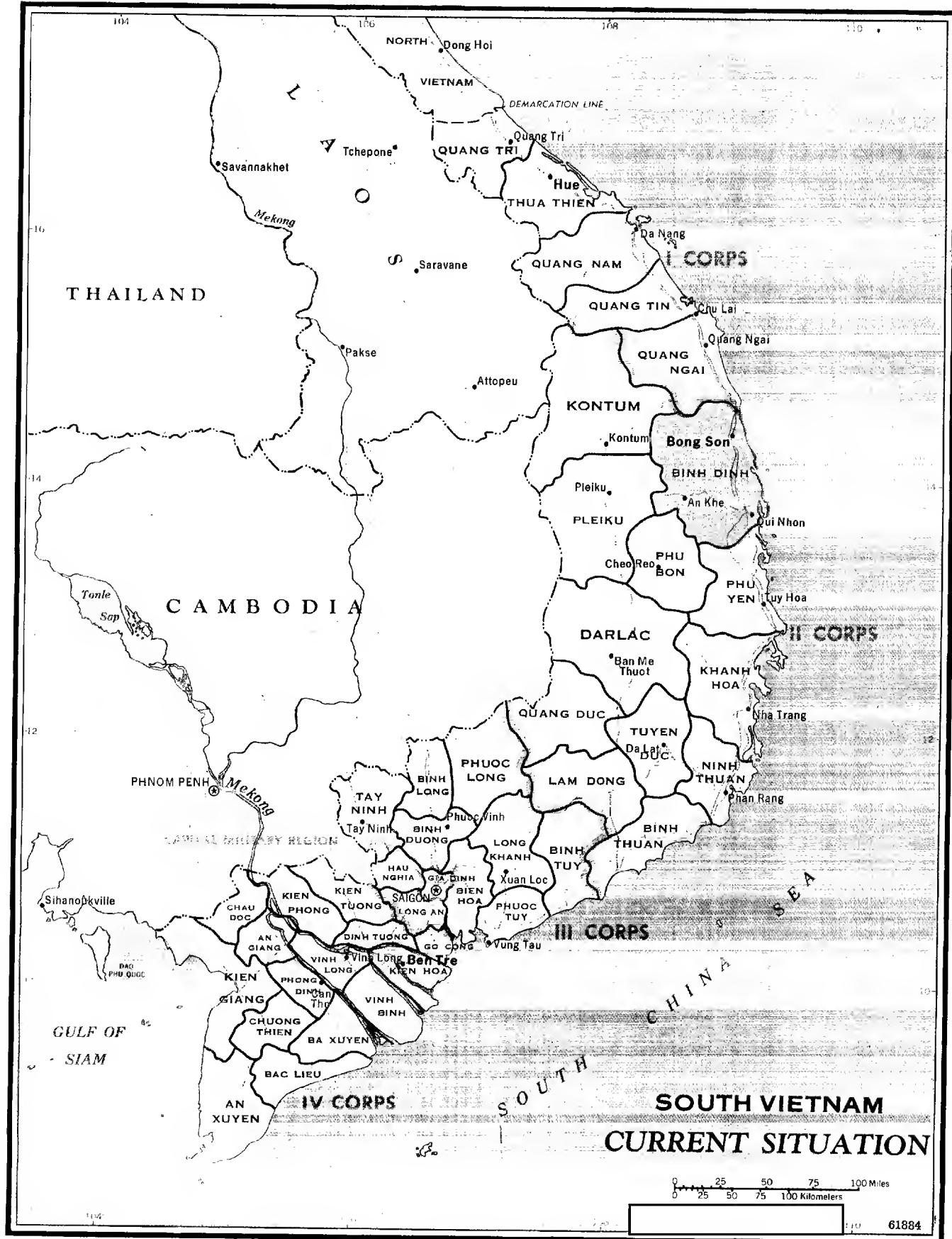
Political Developments in South Vietnam: Buddhist leaders have voiced initial approval of the recommendations of the National Political Congress for constituent assembly elections, but indicate that they will continue to agitate for prior replacement of the Ky government.

A spokesman for the Buddhist Institute told the press yesterday that the ten-point plan of the Congress met the main Buddhist demands and that they were "satisfied at this point." Institute chairman Tam Chau also sought to restrict yesterday's scheduled mass demonstration in Saigon to a meeting on the Institute grounds, although some 5,000-6,000 Buddhist followers did conduct a peaceful "victory march" into the city.

The more militant Buddhists such as Tri Quang have not commented directly, but one of the group was quoted as saying that the "struggle still continues," and that Premier Ky must make government changes if he expects support.

A Buddhist layman, who attended the final day's sessions of the National Political Congress in an unofficial capacity, told the gathering that the decree signed by Chief of State Thieu, promulgating elections within three to six months, was "unacceptable." The layman, who is close to Tri Quang, charged that the government cannot be trusted to keep its word from one day to the next. He proposed that an assembly be convened to act as an interim government pending elections.

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The presentation of the ten-point plan, and General Thieu's response, were followed by a final working session of the National Political Congress, attended by noticeably fewer delegates. At this meeting, a vote was taken approving a proposal to set up a body, to include representatives of the government, to supervise elections. The Congress discussed Premier Ky's suggestion that it decide whether his government should stay in office pending elections, but the issue was not brought to a vote despite majority sentiment in Ky's favor.

Little protest activity by pro-Buddhist elements was evident in the country yesterday, except for two minor student demonstrations in II Corps. In Hue, however, a peaceful, pro-American demonstration was staged by some 1,000 followers of the Nationalist (VNQDD) Party. The themes of the demonstration--anti-Communism, disapproval of the present government, but also disapproval of fostering "chaos" to bring it down--reflected both divided attitudes as well as fear within the party with regard to the "struggle movement."

The Military Situation in South Vietnam: An estimated three Viet Cong companies, supported by heavy mortar and recoilless rifle fire, yesterday attacked a 250-man Popular Forces training center near Ben Tre, the capital of Kien Hoa Province. Fifty Vietnamese defenders were killed (including an undetermined number of civilians), 60 wounded (including 24 civilians), 20 missing, and 182 weapons seized. Enemy losses totaled six killed.

In northeast Binh Dinh Province, an ARVN company and its subsequent reinforcements successfully repulsed two company-strength Viet Cong assaults yesterday, killing 36 enemy troops and capturing 61. Government casualties were placed at eight killed, 19 wounded, and 24 missing. One Communist prisoner identified the attacking unit as consisting of elements of the North Vietnamese 8th Battalion's Quyet Tam Regiment.

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Communist China: The party leadership has entered a difficult transition period caused by the illness of Mao Tse-tung or his inability to wield significant power.

It is now half a year since the aging Chinese party leader last appeared in public in Peking and 20 weeks since his last reported activity, a meeting with a Cambodian delegation on 26 November.

In propaganda aimed at domestic audiences, Peking recently mentioned that it is important for party committees "at all levels" to practice collective leadership. This may be a guarded attempt to alert the Chinese people and the party apparatus for the possibility that a caretaker regime may soon be in charge.

In the past Peking has often recommended "collective leadership" for low-level party committees, but usually in a context indicating that the advice is not meant to apply to the central committee--the party's ruling body. A Liberation Army Daily editorial broadcast by Peking on 5 April, however, quoted Mao as saying that party committees "at all levels" are "collective and should not be monopolized by the first secretary. Within a party committee only the system of democratic centralism should be instituted."

During a transition period, the Chinese leadership may have increasing difficulty in shifting course. In his last days Mao would be expected to continue to take a narrow, doctrinaire view of China's many foreign and domestic problems. Mao's immediate lieutenants probably would be intent on representing themselves as reliable, ultraloyal followers, and therefore, probably would hesitate to recommend major departures during this period.

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Kenya: Yesterday's resignation of pro-Communist Vice-President Oginga Odinga culminates a long campaign by moderate leaders to isolate him politically and to remove him as President Kenyatta's heir apparent.

Odinga's undisputed leadership of Kenya's second largest tribe, his plentiful supply of Communist funds, and the prestige of the vice-presidency had made him the favored contender for eventual succession. For a year an alliance of moderate politicians worked assiduously to undermine Odinga's base of power and to persuade Kenyatta that he was a threat to the country's stability.

The crowning blow to Odinga occurred last month at the convention of Kenya's ruling party. Kenyatta joined in stripping him of the party vice-presidency and in purging his extremist henchmen from office. Relieved of effective authority, he has chosen to resign from both party and government and move into overt opposition.

The question of Kenyatta's successor remains unsettled. The moderate alliance which ousted Odinga has no outstanding candidate and could disintegrate over the issue. Odinga, meanwhile, has been organizing a new political party and preparing for the 1968 parliamentary elections in the hope that a good showing will put him back in the running.

British Guiana: [Prime Minister Burnham is apparently determined to perpetuate himself in power after British Guiana becomes independent next month.]

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[He intends to weaken the East Indian-based People's Progressive Party by imprisoning its leader, Cheddi Jagan, and Jagan's wife at the first opportunity after the independence ceremonies. Furthermore, Burnham plans to postpone the elections now scheduled for 1968 unless he is convinced that he will win them.]

[Burnham is anxious to promote Negro immigration from some of the heavily populated Caribbean islands to help overcome the numerical superiority of Jagan's East Indian followers. He has received some encouragement from a few of the Caribbean governments, principally Barbados.]

[The success of such schemes will depend to a large extent on the reaction of the East Indian community and the effectiveness of the security forces in suppressing any violent protests. The East Indians have been showing an increasing reluctance to take part in political violence. However, even if they should react violently and the security forces were having difficulty controlling them, Burnham could expect to receive assistance from British troops.]

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NOTES

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Nigeria: General Ironsi's regime evidently continues to be threatened by unrest within the armed forces. [redacted] dissatisfaction with Ironsi's cautious leadership has recently intensified to the point where "something violent" may occur soon. Although there is no hard evidence that a move against Ironsi is imminent, there have been signs of dissidence and lack of discipline among the military ever since Ironsi took over the coup d'etat initiated by idealistic younger officers last January.

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The Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs

The Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs

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The Deputy Secretary of Defense

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The Secretary of the Navy

The Secretary of the Air Force

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Chief of Naval Operations, United States Navy

Chief of Staff, United States Air Force

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Commander in Chief, Atlantic

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The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of Army

The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of Navy

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